Second (2nd) Sitting of the Twenty-Sixth (26th) Meeting of the First Session of the Thirteenth (13th) Legislature

THE PARLIAMENT OF TURKS AND CAICOS ISLANDS

OFFICIAL HANSARD REPORT

31 JULY 2026

(Parliament)

Hon. Speaker

Speaker

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PRAYER

OPENING OF THE SITTING

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Good morning, Honourable Members. I now call the 2nd sitting of the 26th meeting of the 1st session of the 13th Legislature of the Parliament of the Turks and Caicos Islands, to be held on Friday, 31 July 2026, at the Honourable Angie S. Francis Building, Pond Street, Grand Turk, to order. Honourable Members, I now call on our Chaplain, Bishop Coleta Williams III, to pray for the Parliament.

PRAYER

Chaplain:

John chapter 13, verses 4 to 5: So he, Jesus, got up from his meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet. When you think of servanthood, what do you envision? Servanthood is defined by humility, putting others first, and finding purpose through action. Nelson Mandela said, I stand before you not as a prophet, but as a humble servant of you, the people. Martin Luther King Jr. connects greatness to the capacity for servanthood.

Servanthood is not about position or skill; it is about attitude. You undoubtedly have met people in service positions who had a poor attitude towards servanthood, and just as you can sense when a worker does not want to help people, you can just as easily detect whether a leader has a servant's heart. The truth is that the best leaders desire to serve others, and not themselves. True servant leaders: first, put others ahead of their own agenda; second, possess the confidence to serve; third, initiate service to others; fourth, are not position conscious; and finally, serve out of love.

Serving leadership is never motivated by manipulation or self-promotion. In the end, the extent of your influence depends on the depth of your concern for others. That is why it is so important for leaders to be willing to serve. If serving is below you, leadership is beyond you. Servanthood does not nullify leadership; it defines it. Jesus, our servant leader, does not cease to be the Lion of the Tribe of Judah when he becomes the lamb-like servant of the people. Let us pray.

Heavenly Father, we lift our Premier, our Leader of the Opposition, our government leaders and public officials to you today. We pray that you transform their hearts and minds, anchoring their leadership in the true spirit of servanthood, humility, and selfless dedication. Grant them humility, helping them to remember that true authority is found in serving others, not in seeking personal power and status. Give them wisdom.

Guide their decisions so that they may govern with integrity, seeking justice, fairness, and the common good of all people. May they put the needs of the vulnerable, the marginalized, and the communities ahead of their own political gain. Give them strength and endurance. Protect them from the temptation of complacency, and give them the stamina to face daily challenges with patience and grace. May their leadership mirror the ultimate example of servanthood, leading with a listening ear, a compassionate heart, and hands ready to build a better future for all.

Bless now our Speaker, bless our Attorney General, bless our Clerk, and bless the proceedings of this Parliament, that all things may be done in decency and in order. Bless our country. It is in Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

TWO MINUTE SPEECHES BY MEMBERS

TWO MINUTE SPEECHES BY MEMBERS

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Pray be seated. Good morning, Honourable Members. I want to welcome you here this morning for this sitting of Parliament. I also want to welcome persons who are in the gallery, the strangers in the gallery. I want to welcome persons listening via Radio Turks and Caicos and those who are listening and watching via our social media platforms.

I also want to apologise this morning for honourable Members. I will now return to the Order Paper, and we now have two-minute speeches by members. The floor is now open for two-minute speeches. The Chair recognizes the Honourable Minister of Public Safety.

Hon. Shaun David Malcolm:

Good morning, Honourable Speaker. Good morning to my honourable colleagues in this House. Good morning to the lady and gentleman in the gallery. Good morning to all the people of these Turks and Caicos Islands, from Gibs Cay to West Caicos, whom I am privileged to be representing. Mr. Speaker, this morning I want to share, as the Honourable Minister of PPID is not in the Chamber today, that he asked me to read his two-minute speech.

I rise today with a heavy heart to pay tribute to some cherished members of our community whom we have recently lost, and to offer comfort to the families they have left behind. Mr. Speaker, first, I wish to extend my deepest and most heartfelt condolences to the family of the late Ivy Hanfield.

To her beloved children, Sandra, Bentley, Goldie, and Lydia, with whom I share a warm, treasured relationship, I say to you: your mother's love and her enduring spirit will live on in each of you. I regret sincerely that prior commitments prevent me from being present at her funeral this coming Saturday, but please know that my thoughts, my prayers, and my full support remain with you in this difficult season. Grief may be heavy today, but the memories you hold will become a source of quiet comfort in the days ahead. Mr. Speaker, I also wish to express my sincere sympathy to Ms. Hillary Heeges, her siblings and family, on the passing of her beloved mother, Ms. Mary Misick.

A mother's love shapes a lifetime, and though she is no longer with us, her legacy of care and devotion endures in the hearts that she touched. To the family of the late Pat Hamilton, wife of the Reverend Calvert Hamilton, and her daughter Joy, I offer my deepest condolences. Reverend Hamilton, you have given so much of your service to others.

May you now feel the embrace of the community you have faithfully served in North and Middle Caicos. Mr. Speaker, in moments such as these, we are reminded that life is precious and fleeting, and that the true measure of a life is found not in its length, but in the love it leaves behind. To all those grieving families, I offer these words of comfort: Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. May you find strength in one another, peace in your faith, and hope in the promise that those we love are never truly lost to us, for they remain forever in our hearts and in our memories.

May God grant eternal rest unto them, O Lord, and let your light perpetual shine upon them, and may their souls rest in peace. Mr. Speaker, this is from the Minister of PPID. On another note, a great deal has been happening within my Ministry. There are quite a number of moving parts at this time, and much work is underway on behalf of the people of these islands. I look forward to updating this Parliament and the people of these Turks and Caicos Islands on the significant progress of my Ministry during my ministerial statement at the next sitting of Parliament. I thank you, and this is on behalf of the Minister of PPID. Mr. Speaker, with that, I say thank you, and I bid you and this country good morning.

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Thank you very much, Honourable Minister, for your two-minute speech. The Chair recognizes the Honourable Member for The Bight.

Hon. Kimbule A. Skippings:

Good morning, Mr. Speaker. Good morning, colleagues. Good morning to our guests in the gallery. A special good morning to the great people of ED6. I would like to align myself with the Minister of PPID in offering condolences to all the bereaved families, especially Ms. Hillary Heeges and family, Ms. Stephanie Henfield and family on the passing of her grandson, and all others who have lost loved ones lately.

I would like to advise the residents of ED6 and Providenciales that roadworks are currently under way on Oak Street, behind Coco Bistro, and on the Lower Bight Road. If you could avoid using these roads and take alternative routes, we would greatly appreciate that. If you have to use the roads, drive with due care and caution for everyone's safety, including construction workers and your own safety. I would prefer that you take an alternative route so that the works can go smoothly and safely, and be completed more quickly.

There are also works going on at the bike park in the Lower Bight, so if you do not have to use the park, please do not do so, so the works can be finished. Again, it is for everyone's safety. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Thank you very much, Honourable Member, for your two-minute speech. Are there any further contributions? The Chair recognizes the Honourable Member for Grand Turk North.

Hon. Arlington Alexander Musgrove:

Good morning, Mr. Speaker. Good morning, Honourable Members. Good morning to the great people of ED1, whom I represent in this Parliament. Mr. Speaker, I would also like to align myself with condolences to all the families who have had loved ones pass, most notably the family of the late Ms. Mary Misick, where I can say that I consider myself to be a part of that family.

When I was growing up, Mr. Erwin Misick, her late husband, was the first person who actually employed me and groomed me to become the man I stand here today. Mr. Speaker, I rise today with a heart filled with gratitude, humility and immense pride as I reflect upon the privilege that has been bestowed upon me to serve in this honourable House of Assembly. Mr. Speaker, there are moments in life when history becomes personal, and today is one of those moments for me. This year marks approximately 50 years since the constitutional

changes that ushered in ministerial government into these beautiful-by-nature Turks and Caicos Islands.

That was not merely a political achievement; it was the beginning of a new chapter in our nation's democratic journey. It was a defining moment that allowed Turks and Caicos Islanders to take greater responsibility for governing their own affairs and shaping the destiny of our people. Mr. Speaker, what makes this milestone especially meaningful to me is that my late father was among those courageous men who stood in that moment and fought for the constitutional changes of our country alongside our national hero, the late Right Honourable JAGS Alexander George Smith McCartney, affectionately known as JAGS; the late Mr. Terence Shiny Smith; the late Mr. Kenneth Carter; and those who continue to live among us, including Mr. Earl Supercy Ingram and Mr. Franklin Lockie Freitas, to name but a few.

My father believed that the people of these islands deserved a greater voice in determining their own future. Mr. Speaker, they sacrificed, they laboured, and they persevered, not for themselves alone, but for the generations yet unborn. Today, 50 years later, I stand in this very Parliament as the third eldest son of one of those pioneers. I cannot adequately express what this means to me.

My father helped fight so that Turks and Caicos Islanders could elect their own leaders, and now his son has been entrusted by the people to sit in this Honourable House and participate in the governance of this very nation he loved. Mr. Speaker, this is not something I take lightly. Every day I enter these Chambers, I remember that I stand on the shoulders of giants. I remember those who paved the way, those who endured criticism, hardship, and uncertainty so that democracy could flourish in these islands.

Their sacrifices remind me that public service is not about privilege; it is about service. I wish to express my gratitude to the wonderful people of ED1, Grand Turk North. From the very beginning, you placed your confidence in me. Through triumphs and trials, through celebration and difficult seasons, you have remained by my side. You have encouraged me, prayed for me, believed in me, and continued to place your trust in me. For that unwavering support, I say from the bottom of my heart, thank you.

I will never forget where I came from, nor will I ever forget who sent me here. Mr. Speaker, I have never claimed to be the smartest person in the House, nor the sharpest mind. Equally, I have never considered myself incapable of learning. Every day has been an opportunity to grow.

Every debate has taught me something. Every challenge has strengthened me. Every criticism has made me examine myself more carefully. Public service has been a continuous classroom, and I remain a willing student, Mr. Speaker. As long as Almighty God grants me strength, I pledge to continue serving with humility, honesty, compassion, and integrity. My desire is not to seek recognition, but to leave these islands better than I found them; to create opportunities for our young people, to care for our seniors, to strengthen our communities, to uplift the less fortunate, to defend the principles of justice and fairness, and to ensure that every citizen has hope for a brighter tomorrow. Mr. Speaker, despite our differences of opinion within this Honourable Parliament, we are united by one shared responsibility: the welfare of the people of the Turks and Caicos Islands. Let history remember that we came together not for ourselves, but for our nation.

The psalmist reminds us in Psalm 127:1: Except the Lord builds the house, they labour in vain that build it. Except the Lord keeps the city, the watchmen watch but in vain. Mr. Speaker, our prosperity, our security and our future depend not only upon our policies, but upon the blessings and guidance of Almighty God. Likewise, Micah 6:8 declares: He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God? Mr. Speaker, I remain optimistic about the future of these beautiful-by-nature Turks and Caicos Islands.

I believe our greatest days are still ahead. Together, with faith in God, unity among our people, and commitment to good governance, we can continue building the best little country in the world. May God continue to bless the people of ED1. May God continue to bless every family throughout these Turks and Caicos Islands, and may God forever bless this Honourable House as we continue to serve our people.

May God continue to bless the beautiful-by-nature Turks and Caicos Islands. Mr. Speaker, I thank you.

TWO MINUTE SPEECHES BY MEMBERS

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Thank you very much, Honourable Member, for your two-minute speech. Are there any further contributions? The Chair recognizes the Honourable Member for Blue Hills.

Hon. Randy Dexter Howell:

Good morning, Mr. Speaker. Good morning to my colleagues here in this Honourable House, to friends and visitors in the gallery, to the listening public of Turks and Caicos, and a special good morning to the people of Blue Hills, who voted for me to be here. Mr. Speaker, I join my colleagues in offering condolences to families, friends and relatives who have lost loved ones over the past few weeks. May God comfort them in the way that only He can.

Over the next few weeks, there are a few funerals that we have to attend. Mr. Speaker, there is a song released in 1979 by Michael Jackson. It says, keep on with the force, do not stop till you get enough. On the evening of 22 July this year, Blue Hills was once again reminded of the fragility of life with a tragic incident that occurred at the Harry Apartment Complex and Plaza on Millennium Highway in Blue Hills.

One young man lost his life, another was hospitalized, and families and friends were left grieving. On behalf of the people of Blue Hills, I extend my deepest condolences to the family of

the deceased and offer prayers for the full and speedy recovery of the individual who was injured. Mr. Speaker, while statistics indicate that crime has declined by approximately 40%, we must never become complacent. Statistics may tell one story, but for the family who lost a loved one, for the community shaken once again by violence, and for residents who again begin to question their sense of security, one incident is one too many.

That particular tragedy reminds us that public safety cannot be viewed solely through the lens of crime statistics. It must also be measured by how safe our people feel in their homes, in their communities and on the streets. Mr. Speaker, this is why I once again renew my call for a police station in Blue Hills to become a reality. If permanent construction cannot begin immediately, let us implement an interim police facility to establish a stronger police presence in the area, increase visibility, quicker response times, and stronger community policing, which will provide reassurance to residents while also serving as a deterrent to criminal activity.

Mr. Speaker, as important as policing is, public safety extends beyond law enforcement. It also includes access to quality healthcare. The Blue Hills medical facility must be upgraded so that it can function as a true healthcare centre for the growing communities of Blue Hills, Wheeland and the surrounding subdivisions.

Every minute matters during a medical emergency. Providing residents with modern healthcare services closer to home is not simply convenient; it saves lives. Western Providenciales is changing rapidly. We see it. New residential developments continue to emerge. Beachfront condominiums are on the rise. Hotels are expanding. Businesses are opening, and families are moving into the area.

Believe it or not, it is happening. Growth is welcome, development is encouraging, and investment creates opportunity. But, Mr. Speaker, development must be matched by investment in the public infrastructure that supports our people. Roads, healthcare, policing, emergency services and community facilities must grow alongside our community. Mr. Speaker, I hope I am not past my two minutes. I have another two minutes. Earlier this week, while planning a community event, I had the opportunity to speak with several of our officers from the Royal Turks and Caicos Police Force. During that conversation, they asked me a simple but deeply meaningful question: who speaks for us? Who advocates for the men and women who put on the uniform every day, leave their families behind, and dedicate themselves to protecting us? That question stayed with me for the past few days, so I stand here today.

Every day, these officers answer emergency calls, intervene in dangerous situations, comfort victims, investigate crimes, and stand on the front line of public safety. We rightly expect professionalism, integrity, courage and accountability from them. But, Mr. Speaker, we must also ask ourselves whether we are meeting our obligations to those who faithfully serve us. How can we expect our police officers to protect our communities when many of them struggle to provide for their own families? When an officer brings home approximately $3,500 a month, rent alone consumes half of that.

Then there are groceries, electricity, water bills, vehicle payments, insurance, fuel, childcare, school uniforms, books, medical expenses and school fees, which amount to approximately the other half of that salary. Even though we have the cap of 22 cents per fuel factor, it helps some of us, but those who are not making it see it differently. Mr. Speaker, these are not luxuries. These are the ordinary expenses of raising a family and living with dignity in today's Turks and Caicos Islands.

This is not simply a discussion about salaries. It is about respect. It is about fairness. It is about recognizing that those who are entrusted with protecting our communities should not themselves be living under constant financial strain. A police service cannot be truly strong if its officers on the ground or on patrol are forced to worry every month about whether they can meet basic household expenses. Mr. Speaker, investing in our police officers is not merely an employment matter; it is a public safety strategy. Officers who are adequately compensated are better positioned to remain focused, motivated, resilient and committed to serving the public with excellence. Therefore, Mr. Speaker, from my vantage point, I urge that we in this House undertake a comprehensive review of our police compensation and benefits in light of today's cost of living.

We should examine practical solutions, including meaningful cost-of-living adjustments. Given the cost of living, $500 will help; in some cases we ask, how much? Housing assistance or housing allowances, improved family and educational support, enhanced health and wellness programmes, and career development opportunities that encourage retention and professional growth should also be examined. Mr. Speaker, these measures should not be viewed as expenses but as investments in national security and community stability. When we ask our police officers to protect us, we owe them more than our appreciation.

We owe them the support necessary to perform their duties with confidence and dignity. Likewise, when communities such as Blue Hills continue to grow and contribute to the economic success of these islands, they deserve policing, healthcare and public service that reflect that growth. The tragedy of 22 July should remind us that prevention is always better than reaction. The conversation I had this week with our police officers should remind us that those who protect us also need our protection.

This morning, Mr. Speaker, I speak not only for Blue Hillians but for every Turks Islander who believes that safer communities begin with stronger public institutions. Let us build that police station. Let us strengthen the Blue Hills medical facility. Let us invest in the men and women who put on the uniform and go out there to protect us.

And let us ensure that, as our nation continues to prosper, our statement of no one left behind stands true. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

TWO-MINUTE SPEECHES BY MEMBERS

Hon. Edwin Andre Astwood:

Thank you very much, Honourable Member, for your two-minute speech. The Chair recognizes the Honourable Deputy Speaker for her two-minute speech.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Good morning, Mr. Speaker. Thank you so much. Good morning to the persons in the gallery, to colleagues here in the Chamber, and to the entire Turks and Caicos. Mr. Speaker, I, like my colleagues, would like to align myself with the sympathies that have been expressed, particularly to the Misick family here in Grand Turk on the passing of Miss May; to my Garden family here in Grand Turk on the passing of Miss Trudy and Jason; and to the Ewing family in Providenciales, who lost Kamori Ewing in the same incident to which the Member for Blue Hills referred. Mr. Speaker, I would also like to say happy birthday to Miss Wealthy Hall. She is celebrating her birthday today.

Miss Wealthy is, I think it is safe to say, a household name in Turks and Caicos, and she is celebrating her 84th birthday today. I would like to send happy birthday greetings to Miss Wealthy. Mr. Speaker, this morning I rise to address the correspondence from Her Excellency the Governor dated 29 July 2026, which was read yesterday by you, concerning the report of the Select Committee on the Integrity Commission. In doing so, I reaffirm my respect for the office of the Governor while remaining firmly committed to upholding the constitutional independence of this Honourable Parliament and the integrity of its committees.

I am also mindful that my responsibility extends beyond simply fulfilling an assigned role. I was elected by the people of the Turks and Caicos Islands to serve as their representative, to uphold the dignity and integrity of this Parliament, and to exercise my own independent judgment in advancing their best interests. From the outset, Mr. Speaker, let me say that the Committee welcomes scrutiny.

If there is a genuine factual error supported by primary evidence, we will consider it. However, disagreement with the Committee's conclusions does not make the report inaccurate, misleading or procedurally improper. The report laid before this Parliament was not my personal report, although my name was singled out in the letter that was read. The report is the work of the Select Committee. It was adopted from collective views after hearing evidence from witnesses, reviewing documents and engaging with stakeholders. The conclusions reached were not mine alone.

They are the collective judgment of the Committee based on the evidence before it. The correspondence suggests that, because the CRESS review was published, it must therefore be accepted by the Integrity Commission in all of its findings and recommendations. Respectfully, publication does not equate to formal acceptance. Our report simply reflects the evidence placed before the Committee. It does not deny that the CRESS report was published or considered. It states only that the Committee did not receive evidence establishing that the Commission acted collectively or formally adopted all of its findings and recommendations.

If evidence exists to the contrary, then Parliament is the proper place for the evidence to be produced and examined. Mr. Speaker, before I proceed any further, I am mindful of Standing Order 59, particularly paragraphs 7 and 8, which require Members not to use the name of the Governor to influence the House and not, except upon a substantive motion, to refer to the conduct of the Governor. I therefore wish to make it absolutely clear that my remarks are directed solely to the constitutional principles raised by the correspondence before us and to the relationship between the institutions of government.

They are not directed to the personal conduct, motives or actions of Her Excellency. This matter goes beyond the contents of a single report. It raises fundamental constitutional principles. Our Constitution establishes three branches of government: the Executive, the Legislature and the Judiciary. Each branch has its own constitutional responsibility, and no branch should seem to be directing, supervising or dictating to another. The separation is one of the cornerstones of our democracy. The Executive cannot supervise Parliament, just as Parliament cannot dictate or direct the Judiciary. Each institution must respect the constitutional boundaries established for it.

Governors have constitutional responsibility within the Executive, but they have no oversight of Parliament and no authority over the proceedings of this House or the work of its committees. A select committee is created on resolution of this House. It reports to this House, and it is accountable to this House. Accordingly, there is no constitutional or procedural obligation for you, Mr. Speaker, to inform the Governor of any parliamentary proceedings simply because her title may have arisen during a debate, nor is there any obligation on Parliament or any select committee to advise the Governor in advance of any meetings, deliberations, reports or procedures.

That is how a parliamentary democracy functions. To suggest otherwise risks creating the very perception that Parliament must first look to the Executive before it carries out its constitutional responsibilities. That is precisely the atmosphere that this Select Committee has sought to avoid. Parliamentary committees must be free to examine evidence, question witnesses, reach conclusions and report to this House without fear, favour or any perception that approval must first be given or obtained from any branch of government.

This Committee remained entirely within the mandate given by this House. The Committee does not legislate. We do not direct the Executive. We do not interfere with the work of the Integrity Commission. We simply examine the evidence, reach conclusions and make recommendations to Parliament. Parliament may accept them, amend them, reject them or refer them otherwise, but that is exactly how parliamentary scrutiny is intended to work. Finally, Mr. Speaker, if there is a specific passage in the report that is alleged to be factually incorrect, then let that passage be identified and let the supporting primary evidence be produced.

The Committee has already made its position abundantly clear. We will correct any demonstrated factual error, but what we will not do is withdraw careful, reasoned conclusions

simply because they are disputed. This report is the product of the mandate given by this House, the evidence received during the inquiry and the collective judgment of the Select Committee. It is a legitimate exercise of parliamentary oversight.

It is not my report. It is the Committee's report, and I stand firmly behind it. Mr. Speaker, I thank you for your time, and may God continue to bless you and bless the entire Turks and Caicos.

TWO MINUTE SPEECHES BY MEMBERS

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Thank you very much, Honourable Member, for your comments this morning during your two-minute speech. Honourable Members, are there any further contributions? The Chair recognizes the Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Edwin Andre Astwood:

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise to make my two-minute contribution. Before I do, last night I thought we would not have reached this point, that we would finish last night, so I went ahead and wished condolences to many of the bereaved families. It does not hurt to do it again here in this Honourable House this morning, in the two-minute speech as I had intended. I want to associate myself with those words of bereavement being offered to the bereaved families of the Turks and Caicos Islands.

Mr. Speaker, we have families throughout the Turks and Caicos Islands that have lost loved ones, and some Members have lost their mothers. Regardless of age, sometimes I wonder which is worse. It is not easy to lose someone who has been with you for a lifetime, or someone who has been with you just for moments, as with a mother and child. I believe that both are terrible in their own unique way, whether it is 10 months or 95 years.

To those Members who have lost their mothers, we think of the Williams family, particularly my cousins Oliver and Foggy and their brothers and sisters. We think of the Misick family, who also lost their mother; Trevor and Bridget, Hillary, Harley, Keisha and the grandchildren. Sadly, Mr. Speaker, it is something that all of us will have to face. As surely as you are born, surely you will die.

Shakespeare said that the world is a stage: all men have their entrances and their exits. Moving straight to the House of Assembly, all of us have our entrances and exits. Some of us last longer than others and some of us come in for a short while, but I want to say to each and every Member: be impactful.

Whatever time is allotted to you by the people of the Turks and Caicos Islands, make sure that you are impactful. Make sure that, in your time in the House, you do what you were sent here to do: to represent the voices of the people. Mr. Speaker, there are many times when I can give my personal opinion, and the opinions outside I may not fully agree with, but a lot of times I have to say it even though I may not fully agree with it. I am here to represent the collective thoughts of the community and of the people of the Turks and Caicos Islands, not just in my constituency of Grand Turk South and Salt Cay, but all constituencies throughout the Turks and Caicos Islands.

With that, I move straight to crime. A lot of our people feel that, even though murders are down, other crimes are on the increase. Persons will say, perhaps, that the Honourable Member is bashing the police. No. I am just saying what persons in the community have related.

We have been having some unprecedented burglaries and robberies. Robbery, I believe, is when you actually hold up somebody physically. Burglary is entering, so it is a little different. Persons are running up into business establishments, holding them up with clients there, and making away with their contraband. It is unprecedented here in Grand Turk that people are afraid to go out on the weekends to establishments because we do not know if, when, or how these bandits will run up in the place that we are. It is no secret that I love to go out in Grand Turk. I am here, there, and everywhere.

Sometimes now I think that I have to sit this way or that way, or sit with my back here, and tell the people I am with that we have to sit this way, because I am seeing it happening. Yes, we appreciate that more is being done, but there are complaints that other forms of crime are increasing here in the Turks and Caicos Islands. Moving on, persons are uneasy about the healthcare setting here in the Turks and Caicos. We have not yet got any clear vision.

We have a number of ministerial statements. Perhaps a clear vision is in one of them, but we have not got a clear vision for the health situation of the Turks and Caicos. We have been hearing all kinds of things in the news: who broke contract, how much money is owing, all kinds of things. But the people want to know that their healthcare is protected.

What will happen to us? Who is going to step in? At what cost? What will this cost the people of the Turks and Caicos Islands now and in the future? Will this be another SIPT, going on for 12 years, with the Turks and Caicos Islands in arbitration, dispute, court and payouts? We need to know that. Or is the Turks and Caicos Government going to make a one-lump-sum payout? Is it going to be spread throughout the years, or has that not been decided? We do not know. We do not know what is going on, but we know this transition is coming, and the Government has to prepare the people for the transition. Mr. Speaker, I cannot dig deep into that, as this is a two-minute speech.

On the development of Grand Turk, there is so much more that can be done here. There are only a few places for tourists to go. People are always saying that we do not know about the carrying capacity of Grand Turk. Well, we have a lot of space where many things can happen. If we can

accommodate all these ships with just a couple of spots for tourists to go, imagine if we get back to places like up on the hill, where we had the Conch World and other places.

There is a lot more that can be done in Grand Turk. I urge the Government to look at what is happening with the Welcome Centre here in Grand Turk. I had cautioned Carnival that, if I had won the election, that would have been turned over to Government and opened up. I told the executives that, and if any of you sit down with the executives who come here, you can ask them if I did not tell them that, whatever it would take, we would have that Welcome Centre, right down the road, opened up.

It has been sitting there from the inception, from 2007. That is almost 20 years that the Welcome Centre has been sitting empty and unoccupied, when persons in Grand Turk want business areas. We need more activity. The tourists need more things. For 20 years it has been unfinished and untouched. I urge the Government to get it open. This is not a PNP problem or a PDM problem. It is a Turks and Caicos Islander problem, and I want to stand with the Government to help them get that going.

Speaking also on business in Grand Turk, I ask the Premier to indulge me in giving me a meeting where I can bring in about 10 or 12 businessmen from Grand Turk. I would invite the Honourable Member for Grand Turk North, the Honourable Ninth All-Island Elected Member and the persons here. Let us have a meeting to see how we can get more businesses and our businessmen who want to do things in Grand Turk moving. I ask the Premier to grant me that meeting.

Let us set it up. Let us get things moving here in Grand Turk. A lot of things need to happen, especially if we are looking at expanding our cruise line offerings and the number of ships calling on Grand Turk. There is so much potential, but we have to work together.

Finally, I am concerned. Just before the election there was so much activity down in the Point and West Road. There was build-out, the quarry was put down, and then for two years nothing. It was all abandoned. Was that all for show? The people of Grand Turk were happy. West Road would be looking good.

I am sure the Minister was happy.

Hon. Edwin Andre Astwood:

The former minister was happy, but now, Mr. Speaker, after two years, nothing. You did it for one pond. I was hoping that they would come up just opposite where Miss Dolly had her shed. That pond, that mud, needs to be sucked out too. The company is here, so move them along.

We did not see anything in the budget. Let us clean out those other ponds and do something there, but nothing. I am wondering whether that was just a show for elections, or whether there was truly a plan for those ponds. Why is it sitting there two years later, Mr. Speaker, and nothing else has been done? Finally, Mr. Speaker, there is much in the news about my involvement and withdrawing from the 10th Minister and all that.

Just to say, yes, when we were looking at it, I am committed to expanding any powers that I can get for any elected Government of the Turks and Caicos Islands. I do believe in that. I am one of those who said that I would have championed at least all the overseas territories having what Bermuda has. At least Bermuda should not be the exception.

The Bermuda style should be the rule, Mr. Speaker. That is what I thought. Persons say, 'Well, they will not do that.' I say, 'You are talking about a British Government from 15 or 20 years ago.' They change their Government and their Prime Ministers almost every other year, so there will be a different way of thinking.

Let us approach them and get that kind of set-up for the Turks and Caicos Islands. When it came to expanding the option to have a 10th Minister if you have an overwhelming majority, yes, of course. Who would not sign on to that? For any Government, certainly if I am in Government, I would want to have that capacity if it is needed, because Government is growing and there are additional departments in Government. But Government is not growing; we are making more places statutory.

Government itself is shrinking and putting out to statutory bodies. Yes, I would want the option, but when you realise that it is the Government's intent to put a 10th Minister right now, I was like, 'Wait a second. Why do we need that right now? Elections just finished. Why are we doing this one year after elections?' In consultation with our team, we had to come up with this: if Government is growing, what about the Opposition? You are going to have more Cabinet Ministers sitting on that side, giving ministerial statements, having a budget and having all this power.

More power on that side, because the next Minister means a whole next ministry, a whole next person's budget I have to go through, a whole next person's budget I have to defend, a whole next person on that side with almost unlimited access to Government resources. What are we getting over here, Mr. Speaker? This side of the House is not getting anything. The logical thing says, if you want to strengthen that side of the House, something must be strengthened on this side. That is all that we were asking in the long run.

If you strengthen one side, for balance, let us strengthen both. Sorry, this is not a debate; this is a two-minute speech, so I cannot get into it. As you know, they have ministerial statements. They have all the powers in the House to go down whatever road they want to go down, but I do not have that power. That is why we need to balance it out, Mr. Speaker. Thank you very much.

I know I went over, and thank you for giving me the extra three minutes.

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Thank you very much, Honourable Member, for your two-minute speech. The Chair recognizes the Honourable Minister of Home Affairs.

Hon. Akierra Mary Deanne Missick:

Good morning, Mr. Speaker. Good morning to my Home Affairs colleagues, and strangers in the Gallery. Good morning to the amazing people of Leeward and Long Bay. Mr. Speaker, I had no intention of giving a two-minute speech because I do have the privilege of having a ministerial statement, which has been circulated for Members to read, on policy initiatives happening in the Ministry.

Of course, I would have taken the opportunity to extend condolences, as I did yesterday, to the Missick family here in Grand Turk, which is part of my family. Mommy was an integral part of my growing up. I am a Mary. My original name was Mary. I do not know where Mervyn found Akierra from, but there are two different stories between Doreen and Mervyn, Mommy and Daddy, on where they found Akierra. Mary A. Missick, known as Ma May, was a Mary that I was named after. I was named after my grandmother, who is Mary Durham; my mother, who is Mary Doreen; and my step-grandmother, who is Mary Teta Quelch.

By extension of that, I get the privilege also to have a Mary in honour of Mary Jane Missick. The four Marys have now gone, and I know I have a quartet of Marys in heaven casting their eyes down. I believe it is Mary Durham who pinches me the most, because she is from South Caicos, and those South Caicos people are a little unruly. I want to honour the Marys who came before and thank them publicly for helping to shape me to be the Mary that I am today.

Some may say there is a little too much sass, but a couple of those Marys were sassy ladies, and so I get a double dose of the sassiness. I want to honour them and say once again, Mr. Speaker, may the souls of the faithfully departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace.

Now, Mr. Speaker, my colleague opposite, the Honourable Leader of the Opposition, has just irked me with his comments a few moments ago. I know, Mr. Leader of the Opposition, that you have to walk a very uncomfortable line. You are the Leader of the Opposition. You are the person in this Chamber in a statutory and constitutional role with a mandate.

Your party has gone through leadership changes. We acknowledge that. It would be no different in the Progressive National Party when we were in opposition and leadership changes had to be made. But, Honourable Leader of the Opposition, you cannot wilfully walk away from a commitment you gave months ago, in your capacity as Leader of the Opposition, just because recent political party changes have decided to walk a different path.

Your word must be your bond. We are put in these positions by the people to serve in their best interests. Months ago, when the discussion was had, there was no indication from you as to how to strengthen the Opposition, as this new proposition is being made by the leader of your party. You, in good faith, signed the letter jointly with the Premier for this side of the House and your side of the House.

We wrote this. Now, if positions have changed, it would have been prudent upon you to advise the Premier that you were withdrawing your consent at that time, not having some correspondence written by a person who is not in this Chamber, by someone who does not have a constitutional mandate like you do, Honourable Leader of the Opposition, to write that correspondence without notice to your parliamentary colleagues. We are one Parliament. Honourable Leader of the Opposition, you cannot ask us to consider your view as the Leader of the Opposition in good faith going forward, that we have your support on fundamental, foundational concerns that affect this country, if in this one instance you show a flip-flop—

TWO-MINUTE SPEECHES BY MEMBERS

Hon. Akierra Mary Deanne Missick:

Honourable Leader of the Opposition, you deserve to represent the people in earnestness and fairness, but more importantly, in truth. My advice to you, whether you want to take it or not, is to remember to stand on the principles that got you into this Chamber. Do not be distracted by noise that has no constitutional relevance to the position you hold here. If at any time you feel that outside noise is requiring you to bend, remind it of your constitutional obligation.

You have a strong, mandated voice that was given by the people of these islands in February 2025. Do not allow that voice to be diminished or diffused by the political musings of political parties, Honourable Leader of the Opposition, because what has happened will make us be seen as a country that cannot stand by its word. We have spent years, your side and ours, building goodwill with the United Kingdom, chipping away at the impression they may have had of leaders in this territory who serve in this Chamber. When we pull a stunt like you have done recently, it affects that.

Yes, they may have had their issues with Prime Ministers, and yes, they have their confusion there, but at the end of the day we still have to work with them and seek the best decisions for the people of these islands. It is not about strengthening the Executive and making you defend a budget and do all this work. Honourable Leader of the Opposition, you knew that was the position in February when you signed the letter. That should have been your question in March, when the letter was brought to you and the discussion was had.

Hon. Gordon Burton:

This is not a debate.

Hon. Akierra Mary Deanne Missick:

I appreciate that, Mr. Speaker. I am not debating. He is interrupting me.

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Honourable Member, please take your seat. The Honourable Minister has the floor.

Hon. Akierra Mary Deanne Missick:

Thank you. Please take your seat. You are interrupting me now, so sit down.

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Honourable Members, this Honourable House is suspended for 10 minutes. Honourable Members, this Honourable House now resumes its sitting. Pray be seated. Honourable Member, before you start, during debate in this Honourable House I expect Members to behave in a certain manner. We all have our views and we all express our views, but I do not want us to get to the point we were at before the House was suspended. We have our two-minute speeches. One Member was allowed to have a say, and other Members should be allowed to have their say. Whether this Honourable House is suspended or not, the quorum while in the Chamber must be maintained.

If I see another outbreak like that, Members will be suspended. Honourable Member, I now ask you to wrap up your two-minute speech.

Hon. Akierra Mary Deanne Missick:

Mr. Speaker, I am ever grateful, and I bid you a pleasant afternoon.

STATEMENT BY MINISTERS

STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Thank you very much, Honourable Member. Honourable Member, I have had my say. Are there any further contributions? Thank you very much. Honourable Member, you will be hearing from me. Are there any further two-minute speeches? There will be no further two-minute speeches. Let us move on. Petitions? There are none. Government notices? There are none.

Private Members' notices? There are none. Notices of questions? There are none. Statements by Ministers. We have a few ministerial statements, and we will have the first ministerial statement from the Honourable Minister of Home Affairs.

MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS UPDATE

Hon. Akierra Mary Deanne Missick:

Thank you again, Mr. Speaker, and good afternoon once again to the amazing people of the Turks and Caicos Islands. I want to give an update on some of the recent changes happening in the Ministry of Home Affairs, to help manage the expectations of the general public as they relate to accessing our services and products.

I start by saying that appointment to this Ministry has been very challenging and very rewarding, and I am grateful for the opportunity given by the Honourable Premier to assist in delivering our Government's mandate through the Ministry of Home Affairs. In our review of the operations, it has been identified that there are longstanding operational challenges that require a significant amount of reform. As we move forward with organisational restructuring, process redesign, staff training and the implementation of new systems, I am urging the public to continue expressing their concerns, but to know that we need them to be a little patient during this period. I share in their frustrations in using the services and applying for the products of this Ministry.

I know first-hand the difficulties as a customer, and I bring that personal experience to the reorganisation and restructuring so that we can serve you better. As indicated during the last session, we have opened two dedicated intake centres for the Ministry of Home Affairs: one on the island of Grand Turk, on Church Folly, and the other on the island of Providenciales, on the second floor of the Sammy Bean Building. The backlog, Mr. Speaker, which we discovered after a deep audit of our systems, is great. That is the reality. The backlog is very significant.

Those comments that may be on social media about the status of documents, unfortunately, relate to people caught in that backlog. All is not lost. The public should note that all new applications will experience a greater turnaround time while the team processes the backlog. I thank those persons who have reached out to say that they have had a better experience now that the two intake centres are operational, and that they are looking forward to the next phase of development in the Department of Citizenship and Naturalisation.

I want to make it abundantly clear that we are no longer adding to the backlog queue, but we are processing in tandem or in parallel. The backlog will continue to need time, as there are significant deficiencies in applications as they may have been presented, as well as additional documents that need to be provided to the Ministry or Department in order to finalise applications. I want the public to know that we hear them, we feel them and we see them, and so we are being agile enough to implement these changes.

We also want the public to monitor their email accounts, as that is probably the easiest way for the Department to reach

out to you for the supplementary documents we may need to support your application. We heard you about your personal name and information being shared publicly, not your biographical information, but information identifying whose status card is ready or whose passport card is ready. We understand the public's concern about their entire government name being displayed publicly. Because I use my entire government name, Mr. Speaker, I did not see the issue, but, listening to the public, I recognise that it is a concern.

As a result, we are implementing a revised notification process whereby individuals will be identified using only their first and middle initials, along with their last name and the last few digits of the receipt number. In that way, we want to provide a level of security for personal biographical information, and we hope that this will help to protect privacy while maintaining an efficient method of communication. Further to that, over the last three days, in our audit of the passport processing unit in the Ministry, we have uncovered more than 800 passports awaiting processing. This figure is alarming, but we do not raise it to create fear. We want the public to know that we are processing, and that we have prioritised passport processing as a result of this discovery.

We want to provide the context that several of these applications are renewal applications, and they will be given first priority because the person is already in the system. The second level of priority will be first-time applications for persons for whom this would be their first document. A 10-year-old child would be a priority, because that would mean that the child had no prior travel document. The third priority will be persons who have recently been naturalised and are now applying for their passport.

Because they have been naturalised, it means they already have a travel document. If an emergency happens and they have to be airlifted out of the islands, there is a travel document that they have, and we will work through processing their BOTC passport in that time. With this in mind, we want the public to know that we will be guided by data. Over the past month, we have received a significant number of emergency passport requests.

While some responsibility for the delays in processing a regular passport renewal or first-time application rests with the backlog in the Ministry, we must ask all passport holders to check their passports for expiration. We want to discourage you from applying for your passport within 30 days of its expiry. The international rule of thumb is 90 days, and we ask you to be mindful. Please do not book international travel without a renewed passport, or a passport that is in date.

International travel for leisure is not a trigger for an emergency passport. Emergency passports are for medical emergencies that obviously could not have been avoided. We encourage all passport holders to ensure that they have a passport with sufficient validity. If you are approaching 90 days before expiration and do not already have a trip booked, please file for your renewal.

If you have a trip booked, take your trip, but as soon as you get back, please file for your renewal. Medical emergencies can happen at any time, so we also want to encourage the general public to renew their Turks and Caicos Islands passports.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT: MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS SERVICE DELIVERY

Hon. Akierra Mary Deanne Missick:

Have it; keep it. It is a document that lasts for 10 years. It saves us having to try to move mountains when we get a call from the hospital that a patient must be medevaced this afternoon and they have just realised their passport has expired. We urge every resident listening today to take a moment to review their travel documents, confirm the expiration dates, and ensure that all necessary documentation is in order before urgent travel becomes necessary.

Mr. Speaker, it is not doom and gloom, because while we have experienced these challenges in the ministry through our various departments, good news is on the horizon. We are putting mechanisms in place to process passports directly on the island of Providenciales. We have had an opportunity to assess the volume of applications, and the reality is that the volume of applications comes from Providenciales. In the next few weeks, we will have two processing options: documents to be processed in Grand Turk and passports to be processed in Provo.

When I say process, I mean that you submit your application, we vet it to make sure that you are eligible or that all the supporting documents are in place, it is then uploaded to the system, and it then gets transmitted to the United Kingdom Passport Office for approval and printing. We do not print passports locally, Mr. Speaker. As you are applying, bear in mind that there could be a 10-day processing period, because the document has to get back from the United Kingdom to the Turks and Caicos Islands and be registered in the department before we let you know it is ready for collection. Mr. Speaker, I will always be candid, open and transparent with the public.

Delays will still be experienced, and they are inevitable during this period of transition and reform, but we are working to modernise and strengthen our Department of Citizenship and Naturalisation so that we can support the growing and expanding population and citizenry here in the Turks and Caicos Islands. Very quickly, Mr. Speaker, I have to move on to the Department of Motor Vehicles. Again, to the general public, we are going through a structural reform as part of our broader modernisation agenda. The changes are designed to improve service delivery, increase operational efficiency and better serve the public. I want to reiterate at the same time that the quota for taxi licence registration and private transfer, also known as VIP SUVs, has been met.

No new applications will be received or processed because there is no further space to issue those licences until a holistic review is conducted and an audit is done of which licences are actually in operation and which licences are in someone's drawer with the hope of using them someday. We will then announce to the public when the quota will be increased and we will be able to accept new applications. That applies only to taxi and SUV transfer. We have omnibus, other private

charter and mass transportation licences available.

Persons who would like to get into this industry should look beyond what is hot and popular and see how they can build their business in the other licence categories that we have. Mr. Speaker, I have to address this growing concern, and I ask members of the public, when they are dealing with our staff members in the Ministry of Home Affairs, whether it is the DMV, Citizenship and Naturalisation or the Registrar General's Office, because those are the four departments that provide products to the public, to be courteous and respectful to each other. We had an incident reported to us yesterday where a customer came into the DMV, accosted the director and used all the disgusting words possible about her.

She does not go to work for that, Mr. Speaker. She goes to work to serve the public. Because what you are asking for is unavailable to you, that is not a decision that she has made; that is the reality of the situation. By cursing her out and then calling me all nice and sweet, as if I am going to pick you over my team member, makes no sense, Mr. Speaker.

We have had that experience in Grand Turk with our customer service centre here. We are asking and urging the general public to treat our team members as they would treat and respect their grandmother. I think we all can agree that we treat our grandmothers with a nice demeanour, because sometimes she has candy in her bag and she has baked cake. Let us approach them with a nice spirit and a nice demeanour.

Yes, they may tell you that your passport is not ready. Yes, they may tell you that the naturalisation is with the Governor's Office being processed and you are mad because you wanted it today. That is not their fault, Mr. Speaker. They are providing you with factual information on your products.

Do not take your frustration out on them. Be frustrated at the system. I have said that the system is flawed, and we are rebuilding it to be better. Let us respect the public servants who are serving you in the capacities that they hold in the Government across all ministries, because abusive language, intimidation, harassment and mistreatment of our staff will not be tolerated.

Trust me, I know enough law to figure out how I can ban you from entering somewhere, and if it is not there, I can create it here in the Chamber with the Attorney General's help. Mr. Speaker, as we waltz our way to the 50th anniversary celebrations of ministerial government, we want to encourage all the residents across the islands to take part in the various activities. The District Commissioner of Middle Caicos and North Caicos activities are next week. We indicated that Grand Turk's activities start this Saturday, and you will see Providenciales and Salt Cay activities announced in due course.

Mr. Speaker, I end as I began. The challenge is real, but I want the people of these islands to know that this Government is listening. This Ministry is working, and we are dedicated to providing the service of excellence as we rebuild, modernise and streamline our service delivery to the people of these islands. With that said, Mr. Speaker, I wish you another pleasant afternoon.

Thank you.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Thank you very much, Honourable Minister, for your ministerial statement. Honourable Members, the Chair now recognises the Honourable Premier for his ministerial statement.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT BY THE PREMIER

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I believe yesterday I circulated a statement that I had intended to give. That statement may be in the possession of some Members. I have withdrawn that statement because I did not think, after reading it, that it was a proper parliamentary statement.

It was more of a political than a parliamentary statement, and after reviewing it, praying about it and receiving direct counsel from my Lord and my Maker, I decided that it would not contribute to national unity and was not befitting of the position that I hold in this Parliament and the position given to me by the people of these islands. I thought they would expect better of me. I have pulled that statement and I am going to deliver a statement that I believe is appropriate to the moment. Mr. Speaker, Martin Luther King said that the ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy.

Mr. Speaker, I continue by saying that we compete to become better, not to make enemies. As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another. Proverbs 27:17.

TWO MINUTE SPEECHES BY MEMBERS

HOSPITALS AND INTERHEALTH CANADA CONTRACT

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

With that said, Mr. Speaker, we are all human. It is human nature to be more emotional than rational, and at times tempers flare. It is easy to take things on when we have our buttons pushed at inopportune times, and sometimes to defend ourselves rather than allowing our record to defend us, and those people who believe in us and can see the wisdom and share the vision that we have for these beautiful Turks and Caicos Islands. Mr. Speaker, I want to use my moments to address two issues that are topical.

One is in direct relation to the hospital and the InterHealth Canada issue, and the other has to do with the constitutional

amendments or the advancement of the Turks and Caicos constitution. Both, I believe, are very important to all of us, and both were addressed by the Leader of the Opposition in his two-minute speech. It is unfortunate that he is not here to hear my side of the story, because he expressed concern about both of those issues, and expressed that there was confusion and a lack of clarity and information available to himself and the general public as it relates to these critical issues. It is very unfortunate that he is not here in the Chamber to hear firsthand what I have to say.

Fortunately, he does have a written statement that he can read at his leisure. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to provide this Honourable House, as I said, with information on two issues. First, I want to speak about the hospitals and the InterHealth Canada contract. Through this Honourable House, the people of the Turks and Caicos Islands deserve a full and frank account of where we stand with the hospital project. They deserve information on its history, its cost and the path we are now charting to resolve it. Mr. Speaker, the people deserve honesty. They deserve to understand how we arrived at this moment, what it has cost them and what this Government is doing about it.

Let me start by saying that I am going to make this statement today, but I have partially prepared a paper that I will, in due course, lay on the table of this House so that the public and this House have full detailed information on every step that has been taken from the initial step in 2008, documented with figures and including the major players in that document, so that there will be no confusion.

I think we owe it to the public to be transparent at all times, regardless of whom it may impact. The important thing is that the public needs to know, because at the end of the day they are the ones who are paying for things. Mr. Speaker, before I proceed, I want to say something directly.

This is not a matter for political point-scoring, and I am aware that voices have been raised in recent days seeking to use this situation for partisan advantage. I want to be unequivocal: the challenges this Territory faces in relation to its healthcare concessions are serious. They are complex, and they predate any single Government or Administration. They will not be resolved by political theatre. They will be resolved only by careful, determined and responsible governance, and that is what this Government intends to provide. Mr. Speaker, it is important to begin with an honest acknowledgement.

When the project agreement was signed in January 2008, it represented a genuine step forward for healthcare in these islands. For the first time, the people of the Turks and Caicos Islands had access to purpose-built modern hospital facilities on Grand Turk and on Providenciales. The framework that was established created a new standard of healthcare infrastructure for our Territory and brought with it clinical services, equipment and capabilities that had not previously been available here. This was a meaningful change, and the persons who conceptualised it and envisioned it should be thanked.

The people who benefited from care in these facilities over the past 15 years deserve to have that acknowledged. Mr. Speaker, a step forward built on a flawed foundation, however, cannot sustain itself indefinitely. It is the foundation, the procurement process, the contractual structure and the financial arrangements that have proven to be the source of the serious and mounting difficulties we now face. The hospitals themselves are an asset. The contract under which they are operated has become an unsustainable burden. Again, I say I want to be brutally frank about the facts here.

The project agreement was entered into following a process that the Commission of Inquiry led by Sir Robin Auld found to be seriously flawed. There was no competitive tender. The construction contract was awarded to a company linked to the same ultimate beneficial owner as InterHealth Canada itself, creating, in the Commission's own words, a closed commercial loop in which public money flowed from the Government to one entity and back to the same private interest through another. Once the paper is laid on the table of this House in due course, it will become clear to the public exactly what the details are.

The Commission found that this constituted an unacceptable conflict of interest. Those findings had consequences that extended far beyond this project. They contributed directly to the suspension of our Constitution and the imposition of direct rule from London in 2009. That story is hardly told, but that is the fact, and it will be disclosed once the documents are laid on the table of this House, because the people of these islands paid a democratic price for what was done in 2008.

Mr. Speaker, I do not rehearse this history to apportion blame across party lines. Governments of different political persuasions have grappled with this contract in the years since. I raise it because the House and the public must understand the nature of the problem we inherited and why the structural flaws embedded in this agreement from the very beginning have proven so difficult and so costly to resolve.

Beyond the procedural failure, the contractual architecture itself created conditions in which accountability was persistently difficult to enforce. Mr. Speaker, I want the public to follow me, because I want to be pellucidly clear about this to avoid any further political mileage seeking. The two InterHealth Canada companies, one responsible for infrastructure and one for clinical services, owed entirely separate obligations to the Government. Neither was liable for the failures of the other. When disputes arose about performance, each entity could point to the other. Responsibility diffused across a legal structure that was designed, it appears, more to protect the private parties than to protect the public interest.

Compounding this, the clinical service payment was structured on a cost-plus basis. The operator was reimbursed for the actual cost plus a fixed margin. The original plan was to transition to a capitation model. What does that mean? It means that, based on the throughput in the hospital, there was supposed to be a formula on a per capita or per patient basis depending on the kind of treatment administered.

There would be some risk on the part of the operator to ensure that it had an incentive to deliver efficiency. The original plan was to transition to a capitation model, one that

would have given the operator a genuine financial incentive to manage costs efficiently. That transition never happened. For the entire duration of this concession, the Government has paid what the operator spent plus profit, with no structural pressure.

Mr. Speaker, this is not a sustainable model for any healthcare system, and it is a central reason why the cost of this arrangement has grown to the levels that we are confronting. The financial consequences of these structural failures have been severe, and they have fallen entirely on the taxpayers of the Turks and Caicos Islands. Between 2016 and 2025, this Territory spent, and this is all healthcare, not just InterHealth, $828 million on public health. I am highlighting this so the public can understand the challenge we face with the sustainability of the healthcare framework that we have today, because we cannot continue to operate in the system.

We are going to have to change the system itself. Today, healthcare consumes more than 32% of all Government expenditure and 8.1% of our entire GDP. This is above Caribbean norms and unsustainable for a small island developing state. Mr. Speaker, that equates to $2,600 for every man, woman and child in these islands every year. These figures do not include the cost of litigation in relation to the InterHealth Canada matter. When disputes under the contract reached the point that they could no longer be resolved through negotiation, they went to international arbitration under the rules of the International Chamber of Commerce. The first arbitration concluded last year, and it was ruinously expensive.

The tribunal ordered the Government to pay InterHealth Canada $18.5 million in principal and interest. It then awarded the company 80% of its legal costs, a further $8.2 million, and 80% of the ICC's own arbitration costs. Together with our own legal expenses and an earlier interim award, the total cost to this Territory from the first arbitration alone was approximately $39 million, roughly 8% of our entire annual budget. Mr. Speaker, I want this House to sit with that figure for a moment: 8% of our annual budget consumed not by a school, not by a road, not by a housing programme, not by anything that improves a single life in these islands, but by the cost of resolving a dispute with a private contractor over a contract that should never have been structured the way it was. Quite frankly, TCI was used as a guinea pig. This sort of arrangement we are going to have to avoid in the future.

We have to avoid referring things to these international arbitration bodies, and any investor-state contract that insists on us doing so, we have to say goodbye to them. We would rather not have it than subject ourselves to the ICC and other international arbitration bodies. I am aware that there is a mechanism in Europe that bypasses this, and we should be researching how we make use of that kind of arbitration body rather than going through the ICC.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

HOSPITAL CONCESSION ARBITRATION AND CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

The ICC framework contains no mechanism to consider a small state's ability to pay when making cost awards. The tribunal applied commercial standards of procedural rigour to a Government—standards designed for corporations operating in sophisticated legal environments—without any meaningful concessions to the realities of governing a small island territory. This is a systemic injustice, and it is something to which I will return before I finish. Mr. Speaker, I want to turn to the second arbitration, which connects to some extent to the letter of termination received.

I call it a purported termination because I do not want to acknowledge that. The second arbitration was commenced by InfraCo, and, as I said earlier, there are two companies involved. But I want to be equally clear about what this award does not mean. It does not mean the arbitration is over. It does not mean that the Government's position on InfraCo's performance has been found to be without merit. Our counterclaims for deficits, safety deficits, hurricane damage remediation failures and entitlement to financial deductions have not yet been heard. They remain live.

The tribunal has also ruled on a series of technical questions about how the contract's maintenance provisions should be interpreted—questions that will directly shape the value and prospects of those counterclaims. We have been seeking urgent legal advice on the full implications of those rulings and, as I said earlier, I will update the House in due course. The combined known cost to this country from both arbitrations now stands at approximately $40 million. The Leader of the Opposition should be here because, in his address yesterday, he had all sorts of strange calculations about what the cost is going to be.

As far as the Government stands, none of those calculations comes near to what our realistic expectations, based on professional calculations and precedent, would dictate. The project agreement remains in force and InfraCo continues to operate the hospitals under the concession, but every month that this contract continues brings mounting payment obligations, continuing legal costs and further strain on public finances already stretched by the cost of this arrangement. The imperative to bring this concession to a conclusion on legally sound, financially fair terms has never been more urgent. I want to repeat that, because healthcare and clinical service delivery at the hospital are at the core of our interest.

It is imperative to bring this concession to a conclusion, but that can only be done, or should only be done, on legally sound, financially fair terms, and that is urgent. Let me speak for a moment on what I believe the path forward should be. This Government will act decisively and responsibly. In the immediate term, we have complied with the tribunal's order and made the required payment within the deadline. That is done. Simultaneously, we have been obtaining urgent legal advice on whether our ongoing deduction strategy, under which we have been withholding $1.8 million per month in disputed sums, remains lawful in light of the pay now, dispute later ruling.

We will brief Parliament fully on all implications of the award,

and we will assess the fiscal impact to ensure appropriate budget adjustments are made. This is not the last time you are going to hear from me on this issue. I am giving an undertaking now to ensure that Parliament is kept abreast of every step that is taken. Over the coming months, we will pursue our counterclaims with the strongest available evidence and the best legal representation we can field.

We are better prepared for this arbitration than we were for the last, with strong counsel, enhanced circumstances and well-evidenced positions on InfraCo's obligations. That preparation will continue. We will also accelerate termination negotiations. A negotiated exit on fair terms remains the preferred outcome for the Territory and ultimately for both parties.

The hospitals are an asset that belong, in every meaningful sense, to the people of the Turks and Caicos Islands. Reclaiming control of them and of our healthcare system is the fundamental objective. When that day comes, we will be ready. We are developing comprehensive transition plans covering workforce, capital investment, accreditation and the full range of operational requirements so that public management of our hospitals begins from a position of strength, not improvisation.

We will engage the United Kingdom Government, briefing them on the current position and exploring what political, technical and financial support may be available. We will work through CARICOM and the Commonwealth to advocate for reform of international arbitration, to introduce procedural flexibility, development-sensitive interpretation and affordability safeguards that protect small states from the disproportionate burden that the current system imposes. I want this country to be aware that, in the last two party manifestos of the Progressive National Party, we said very clearly that it is our intention to establish a health service authority. That is indeed one of the options.

Unless it is totally impractical and unaffordable, that remains an option—a priority option as opposed to handing the management of our hospitals over to a foreign interim or permanent health service provider. I want the public to be sure of that. It is my and my party's declared intention to establish a health services authority under which all of the health requirements of the Turks and Caicos Islands are placed, including the hospitals. That is our preferred option.

The hospital project gave these islands healthcare infrastructure that they did not previously have. I do not want to diminish that decision at the time it was made, because it had to have had some vision for the persons responsible to arrive at that conclusion. The fact that the structure was flawed—and I have gone through this myself—was due to a large extent to conflicting interests from specialist consultants and business entities resident in the United Kingdom. As I said, it was a guinea pig.

It was a package of three in one, when the typical public-private partnership for hospitals focuses mainly on the infrastructure and facilities management side. Clinical services are always separate. I am aware that it is 1 o'clock, so I ask that you let me finish. The TCI hospital project, as I said, gave these islands healthcare infrastructure they did not previously have. That is a fact, and it is worth stating, but it did so through a process that was fundamentally compromised, under a contract that was structurally unworkable and at a financial cost that has proven unsustainable for a country of our size.

The combined arbitration exposure of approximately $49 million, set against a healthcare bill that now exceeds 32% of all Government spending—and I again want to make it clear that that healthcare bill is for the entire country; I am not just speaking of InterHealth Canada—represents a burden that cannot continue. The people of the Turks and Caicos Islands deserve a healthcare system that is not only modern and well equipped, but publicly accountable, financially sound and built on a foundation that will last. The Government will resolve the concession. We will resolve the concession.

It will reclaim the hospitals, and it will build a healthcare system worthy of the trust that our people place in it. I ask all Members of this House, on both sides, to approach this matter with the seriousness it demands. The decisions ahead will have consequences for every family in these islands, and those families deserve our best efforts, not our worst instincts. I would like to spend the next few minutes speaking about the constitutional amendments and the expansion of the executive branch.

Unfortunately, the Leader of the Opposition is not here because what determines who sits on this side of the aisle and who sits on that side is indeed the Constitution, but at the end of the day it is the elections. The elections decide who sits over there and who sits over here. It is not something that we can carve out that is not in the Constitution, and we do not do anything in the Turks and Caicos Islands that is different from what happens elsewhere. In fact, we are just catching up because what we did before was not democratic.

You cannot have people in Parliament who are not elected. I intend to speak plainly, to set the record straight and to place before this House the full context of what was proposed, why it was proposed, and what it most certainly was not. The Turks and Caicos Islands is no longer the Territory it was 20 years ago. Our economy has grown, our population has grown, and the complexity of the issues we are called upon to manage—healthcare, infrastructure, financial services, immigration, environmental protection, foreign investment and the full range of public administration—has grown enormously.

The demands placed on modern government in this Territory are not modest. They are substantial, and they require a Cabinet and an Executive that have the capacity, bandwidth and collective expertise to meet them. The proposal to expand the Executive is therefore not an act of excess; it is a recognition of practical reality.

A Government that is stretched too thin cannot govern well. A Cabinet that is overloaded cannot give proper attention to the serious decisions that affect the lives of every family in these islands. Expanding the Executive is about ensuring that the people of the Turks and Caicos Islands are served by a Government that is properly equipped to serve. This is the case for expansion.

It is straightforward, it is honest, and it rests entirely on the public interest. Before I go further, I want to address directly what has been said and implied in some quarters about this proposal. While I have the Member for the Bight on the other side, he may call me an old man, but I do not have old ideas. My ideas are modern and progressive. The future belongs to you and to the other younger persons here, and it is important that you do not let that be hijacked by persons who have alternative motives and interests that you may not even be aware of. I am not speaking today to what those interests are, because I deliberately decided not to, but I doubt that those interests are aligned with your interests and the interests of the people of the Turks and Caicos Islands.

CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS AND EXPANSION OF THE EXECUTIVE

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

It has been suggested that an expansion of the Executive is connected to an expansion of term limits. Let me be unambiguous: I have never at any time advocated for an extension of the current term limit provisions. I have never done so privately, publicly, or in any communication with the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office.

That suggestion is false, and I will not allow it to go unchallenged in this House. I deliberately decided not to put the communication between the Government, the Leader of the Opposition and the FCDO in the public domain. I believe it is there, but I did not do so because that is not the way I believe official business ought to be handled.

The proposal advanced was for an expansion of the Executive, additional ministerial capacity to carry out the work of government. It was not, and never has been, a proposal to alter the terms on which elected Members serve. Anyone who asserts otherwise is either misinformed or is deliberately misrepresenting the position, and this House deserves better than that. Mr. Speaker, there is another matter I must address with equal clarity.

The request to the FCDO for the expansion of the Executive was not made unilaterally. The Honourable Minister for Home Affairs spoke eloquently about that earlier. It was made with the knowledge and support of the Honourable Leader of the Opposition. I say that not to embarrass anyone and not to score a political point, but because accuracy matters and because the people of the Turks and Caicos Islands are entitled to know the full picture.

When a request is advanced with cross-party support, it carries a different weight. It reflects a shared assessment of the Territory's needs. If the Leader of the Opposition did not consult his party before indicating his support, that is a matter between him and his colleagues. It is not a matter for which this Government can be held responsible.

What I can say is that the position conveyed to us was one of support, and we proceeded on that basis in good faith. I therefore take this opportunity to appeal directly to the Leader of the Opposition to stand by the position he originally agreed. This was a joint undertaking. The Territory's interests have not changed since that agreement was reached. What has changed, it appears, is the political temperature, and I urge Honourable Members not to allow political pressure to override a commitment that was made in the genuine interest of the people of these islands. As the Honourable Minister for Home Affairs has said, it is important for those people in the House with statutory obligations to live up to the expectations of the people.

Mr. Speaker, there are some who suggest that the answer to executive capacity is not the expansion of elected Members but a return to appointed Members of the House of Assembly. I want to address that proposal directly, and I want to be direct about where I stand. To return to appointed membership of the House would be a retrograde step, one that runs contrary to the democratic aspirations of our people and would be a disservice to the memory and legacy of our national hero. Our national hero fought for the advancement of self-governance, for the empowerment of the Turks and Caicos Islands people, and for a democratic future built on the principle that the people of these islands should govern themselves through representatives they have chosen freely at the ballot box. To dilute that principle by introducing appointed Members, individuals placed in this House not by the people but by the stroke of an executive pen, would contradict everything that the national hero's legacy represents. That would mean going back to the old days when the Governor would have the right to appoint people to this House.

We cannot be critical of the remit of the Governor in one sense and then ask her, or whoever happens to hold that office, to appoint people to this House. If this is an independent Parliament of the people, nobody should have the right to appoint anybody to this House. It should be the people who elect people to this House. I am very surprised that the smart people in the PDM party would allow one man to come out of the wilderness, be resurrected and dictate to them that they should take a retrograde step.

I believe that view represents personal interests. May I say that somebody must be paying, because we have been on a road of making empowerment decisions for our people, whether in real estate, business licensing or other matters, and there are people in the community who do not like what we are doing. There is a plot in the same way that there was a plot in 2007 to bring this Government down. The same people are involved, and it cannot mean good for this country.

It would set us back. Anyone who is firing blindly should catch themselves and start thinking critically about what they are being told and how they are being led. Mr. Speaker, it is worth reminding this House of the historical record. At the time of the most recent constitutional change to our framework, the Turks and Caicos Islands was, I stand to be corrected, the only British Overseas Territory that still retained appointed Members of the House of Assembly.

Every other Overseas Territory had moved beyond that model. We were the last. The removal of appointed Members was not a radical departure; it was an overdue alignment with the democratic standards that our sister territories had already embraced. To contemplate reversing that progress now, to

voluntarily step back into a constitutional arrangement that every comparable jurisdiction had already left behind, would be to embrace willingly a colonial mindset that has no place in the Turks and Caicos Islands in 2026.

We should be moving forward, not backwards. Mr. Speaker, I want to say something that I hope will be heard by every Member of the House and by the people watching and listening beyond it. The Constitution of the Turks and Caicos Islands is the foundational document of our democratic life. It is the framework within which we all operate: government and opposition, majority and minority, today's winners and yesterday's. It belongs to all of us, and more importantly, it belongs to the people. In making decisions, it is important to know that oppositions of today become governments of tomorrow, and governments of today become oppositions of tomorrow.

We should not make any decision that will affect us when we are on the other side of the table, because as surely as day follows night, eventually that will happen. It may be a long time, but it will happen. The Constitution must never be treated as a political instrument. It must never be used as a weapon to be picked up by one side and put down by the other depending on who finds it convenient in a given moment.

The reality of democratic life is that sooner or later the Government becomes the Opposition and the Opposition becomes the Government. That is the nature of democracy, and it is right that it should be so. Whatever constitutional arrangement we put in place today, we put in place for everyone, including ourselves when we are no longer on this side of the House. A Constitution that is used as political ping-pong, amended when it suits one party and challenged when it suits another, does not serve the people. It creates stalemate. It creates uncertainty.

It creates what I would describe as constitutional inertia, where every significant question of governance becomes hostage to the political cycle and the real business of building this Territory is forever deferred. We are better than that. This House must be better than that. Mr. Speaker, I would like to speak to the Boundaries Commission and the composition of this House, because that determines who sits in this House to some extent.

I am conscious that the debate around constitutional matters does not exist in isolation. There are other important questions about the democratic architecture of this Territory that are alive and legitimate. It is my understanding that the Boundaries Commission will soon be appointed. The Commission will undertake the important work of determining the composition of this House, specifically the balance between at-large Members and electoral district Members.

This is a matter of genuine democratic significance, and I acknowledge that the Leader of the Opposition has raised legitimate concerns about it. We know that because of the time crunch, that important work could not have been done before the last election. Those concerns deserve to be heard. The question of how this House is constituted, who represents whom, and on what geographic or at-large basis, goes to the heart of how effectively the people of the Turks and Caicos Islands are represented in their own Parliament.

The Constitution already decides who sits here and who sits over there. I understand that time has not yet allowed for the full consideration of those concerns, but they have merit. I give this House my commitment, and my party's commitment, that as the Boundaries Commission process proceeds there will be proper opportunity for that conversation to take place. However, the pendency of that process is not a reason to delay this specific and distinct question of executive expansion.

These are separate matters, and one does not need to wait upon the other. Mr. Speaker, I am winding down. Let me say clearly that the sequence of steps is important. The amendment to the Constitution that has been requested for the expansion of the Executive has been subject to discussion. It is my understanding that the outgoing Minister for the Overseas Territories gave tacit agreement to the proposed amendment moving forward. That agreement was reached in good faith on the basis of a position that had cross-party support in this country. The Government's position is clear: we should proceed with that agreed amendment now.

I call on the members of the PDM party, the executive and the rank and file, to have a serious talk with their leader because what he is doing is not progressive. The Constitution does not belong to me and it does not belong to him; it belongs to the people. It is overdue. The Government's position is clear.

We should proceed with that agreed amendment now. The Turks and Caicos Islands is the only Overseas Territory that does not have junior Ministers or parliamentary secretaries. Why would he object to that?

STATEMENT BY MINISTERS

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT ON CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM AND EXECUTIVE CAPACITY

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

The time is overdue. The Territory's need for adequate executive capacity does not diminish because the political weather has changed. Once that amendment is in place, this Government is ready and eager to convene a Constitutional Committee, and I believe the Constitution provides for that, to consider further broader amendments. As the Leader of the Opposition does believe that we should aspire to the constitutional level of Bermuda, he should not be agreeing to having appointed Members in the House.

What he should be speaking about is the composition of the Cabinet, who chairs the Cabinet, and how the reserve powers of the Governor can be diluted and those of the executive or ministerial appointees can be increased. That is what he should be focusing on, so that we take away the excuse of blaming the British.

The more power we have, the more we can do for ourselves. Mr. Speaker, once that amendment is in place, as I said, the

Government is ready and eager to convene a Constitutional Committee to consider further broader amendments. I want to be explicit about the direction those further amendments should take.

They should move this Territory towards greater autonomy, towards a more mature and self-governing constitutional relationship with the United Kingdom, and towards a framework that reflects the aspirations and capabilities of our people. This is the constitutional journey we should be on, not a journey backwards to appointed Members and reduced democratic accountability, but forward together, a TCI that governs itself with greater confidence, greater authority and greater self-determination. That is what we want. I would like to make a personal appeal to the Leader of the Opposition in his absence.

The position that was jointly communicated to the FCDO reflected a moment of cross-party consensus on what this Territory needs. The Leader of the Opposition knows that. Ordinarily I would have some sympathy for the Leader of the Opposition, but I do not in this case, because I believe he has relinquished his constitutional duty to someone outside the House and, as yet, there is no guarantee that he has the full support of his own party, because he has not been tested. You go into a room with 20 people, or however many, and come out as leader.

What happened with the rest of the people? Are you thinking about them? Do they have confidence in you? I do not think so. At the next general conference of the party, it could be somebody else. The position that was jointly communicated to the FCDO reflected a moment of cross-party consensus on what this Territory needs. That consensus did not arise by accident. It arose because thoughtful people on both sides of the House recognised that executive capacity is a governance issue, not a political one.

I understand that managing a party is not always straightforward. There are lots of fights, and positions agreed at one level do not always command immediate support at every level. But I ask the Honourable Member to reflect on what was agreed and why, and to stand by it. The Government is ready to engage at any time on additional forward-looking constitutional amendments.

We are not asking the Opposition to write a blank cheque. We are asking them to honour a commitment that was made in the interest of the people. In return, we offer a genuine and open process of constitutional dialogue that will give the Opposition full opportunity to advance its concerns about the Boundaries Commission, the composition of this House, and any other matters of democratic significance. This is a fair offer.

It is an open offer, and it is one that this Government makes without condition beyond this: honour the position set out in the letter submitted to the FCDO. That is the foundation on which further progress can be built. Mr. Speaker, I conclude. The case for expanding the Executive is a case for better governance.

It is a case for ensuring that the people of the Turks and Caicos Islands are served by an administration that has the capacity to meet the demands of a modern, growing and increasingly complex territory. It is not a case for expanding anyone's tenure. It is not a case for undermining democratic accountability, and it is most certainly not a case for returning to the appointed membership of a House of Assembly, a model that every other British Overseas Territory had already abandoned and that has no place in the democratic future our national hero envisioned for us. The Boundaries Commission will do its work.

The Constitutional Committee will have its opportunity. Broader reform, reform that moves us towards greater autonomy and self-governance, is a goal this Government actively embraces. But none of that can proceed from a foundation of broken commitments and constitutional inertia. We must take the agreed step first. We must move forward. I call on Members to engage with these questions. I call on the Leader of the Opposition and on our opposite numbers, because at the end of the day the PDM and the PNP are not enemies. We are competitors, and where that competition meets in the middle in the interest of our people, we should sign off on it.

The ayes have it. I call on Members to engage with these questions in the spirit of genuine public service, setting aside the temptation to use constitutional matters for short-term political advantage, and to focus instead on what kind of government and what kind of democracy the people of the Turks and Caicos Islands deserve. I thank you for listening. I thank the public for listening, and I hope that what I said today resonates with those people of goodwill on the other side.

I appeal to us again to set aside the temptation to use constitutional matters for short-term political advantage and focus instead on what kind of government and what kind of democracy the people of the Turks and Caicos Islands deserve. With that said, Mr. Speaker, I commend this statement to the House.

Thank you.

POINT OF CLARIFICATION ON SELECT COMMITTEE REVIEWING THE INTEGRITY COMMISSION

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Thank you very much, Hon. Premier, for your ministerial statement. Honourable Members, before returning to the Order Paper, I would like to call on the Honourable Attorney General, who wishes to make a point of clarification. Honourable Attorney General.

Hon. Rhondalee M. Braithwaite-Knowles, OBE, KC:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We have had quite an eventful day today, although the agenda was quite light at the beginning of the day. I think we need to watch these light agendas. I wish to address this Honourable House on a point of clarification

related to the concerns that have arisen regarding the interaction between the Select Committee reviewing the Integrity Commission and Her Excellency the Governor, particularly the question of whether there were factual inaccuracies and whether prior notice of serious criticisms ought to have been provided before the final report of such criticisms was made public.

At the outset, it is important to reaffirm that this matter should not be viewed as a contest between constitutional institutions. Both the Select Committee and the Governor are exercising functions conferred upon them by law and the Constitution, and both are entitled to the respect of this Honourable House. The principle underlying giving notice to any person or institution impacted by criticisms in parliamentary reports is one of procedural fairness. It is rooted in the longstanding rules of natural justice, namely that any person who may be subject to significant criticism should ordinarily be made aware of the substance of that criticism and afforded a reasonable opportunity to respond before adverse findings are made public.

At the same time, it is necessary to recognise that the precise legal requirements applicable to public inquiries do not automatically apply in the same manner to every parliamentary proceeding or select committee process. This process, however, could help to clarify any factual inaccuracies and strengthen the report's findings. The powers, procedures and privileges of parliamentary committees are governed by the Standing Orders of this Honourable Parliament and the Constitution. The essential question, therefore, is whether the requirements of fairness were met.

The focus should be on whether any individual or office holder who was the subject of criticism was given a meaningful opportunity to know the concerns being raised and to provide a response before conclusions were reached. As Attorney General, I do not propose to enter into the substance of the disagreement or to pronounce on the conduct of either party. My concern and the concern raised by the report of the Select Committee, as well as the message from Her Excellency the Governor, is the same: public confidence in our institutions is best served when all public bodies conduct their work in a manner that is transparent, fair, measured and respectful of due process. It would be unfortunate if procedural disagreements were allowed to overshadow the important and substantive work undertaken in reviewing the effectiveness, governance and accountability arrangements of the Integrity Commission as one of our institutions protecting good governance.

I stood in this very Parliament at the time when the committee was being formed to affirm my view that the House has the purview to review the CRESS report and the workings of the Integrity Commission. This clarification is not, and should not be seen as, advocating against the work of the Select Committee or the Governor. It is equally correct to point out that the review of the Integrity Commission sought by Her Excellency the Governor through the CRESS review fell squarely within her good governance purview under the Constitution and under law. There is common interest between both institutions.

I therefore encourage all parties to approach this matter in a constructive spirit, guided not by personalities but by principle, and with a shared commitment to good governance, fairness and respect for constitutional institutions. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SUBSIDIARY LEGISLATION MADE SINCE MARCH 2026

ORDER PAPER

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Thank you very much, Honourable Attorney General, for your point of clarification. Honourable Members, I will now move on with the Order Paper. Personal explanations: there are none. Motion for leave of absence: we had a motion for leave of absence from the Honourable Minister of Education. Oral replies to questions: there are none. Notices of motions for the adjournment of the Parliament on matters requiring urgent consideration: none. Subsidiary legislation made since July 2026 is detailed in the Order Paper. Honourable Members, Honourable Premier, we have now concluded the Order Paper.

SUSPENSION OF SITTING

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Could you give me a minute? I know it is 1 o'clock and we do not want to come back here, because people may want to leave, but I need the right language to speak to you and the public in relation to the prorogation, which I intend to do from 6 August. Could we have a five-minute suspension, and then we will come back? I will speak to that and then we can go for lunch.

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Honourable Members, this Honourable Parliament is hereby suspended for five minutes. Honourable Members, this Honourable House now resumes its sitting. Pray be seated. Honourable Premier.

PROROGATION OF PARLIAMENT

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Before I sit, I would like to associate myself with all of the condolences and congratulations that were offered to the various families this morning on the passing of some very important people, some of whom I know and who have been in my life in one form or another.

Mrs. Mary Misick was one of my favourite people in the world. When we go to North Caicos, where my neighbour String was

buried, and Mrs. Handfield, because I am an at-large representative and I have lived on every island in this country, I want to associate myself with all of those families who are mourning loved ones, and those persons who are experiencing severe illnesses.

All of the sympathies, empathies and congratulations are with all of them. Mr. Speaker, what I would like to do at the moment is to make an announcement before adjournment, before prorogation. I wish to inform this Honourable Parliament that, acting in accordance with section 57 of the Constitution, I have advised Her Excellency the Governor to prorogue the Parliament on 6 August 2026, by proclamation to be published in the Gazette today.

Parliament will reopen in September, and a further proclamation will be published to confirm the precise date.

ADJOURNMENT

ADJOURNMENT SINE DIE

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Thank you very much, Honourable Premier. Honourable Premier, you can call for adjournment.

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Do I call for adjournment after the prorogation?

Hon. Gordon Burton:

The prorogation is not legal yet. It has to go to the Gazette.

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

Mr. Speaker, I adjourn this Parliament sine die.

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Honourable Members, this Honourable Parliament is hereby adjourned sine die.